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HENNEPIN CANAL PARKWAY

TRAVEL GUIDE

Eastern Main Line

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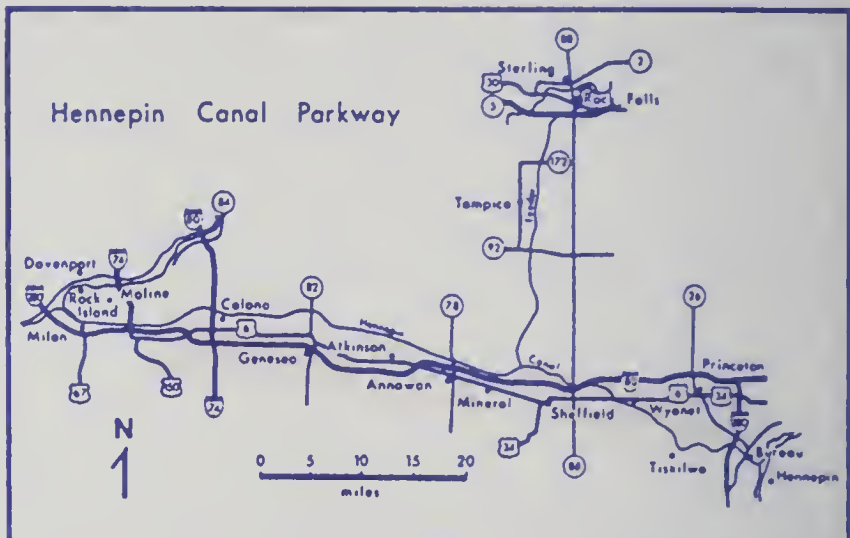


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CONSERVATION

Eastern Main Line

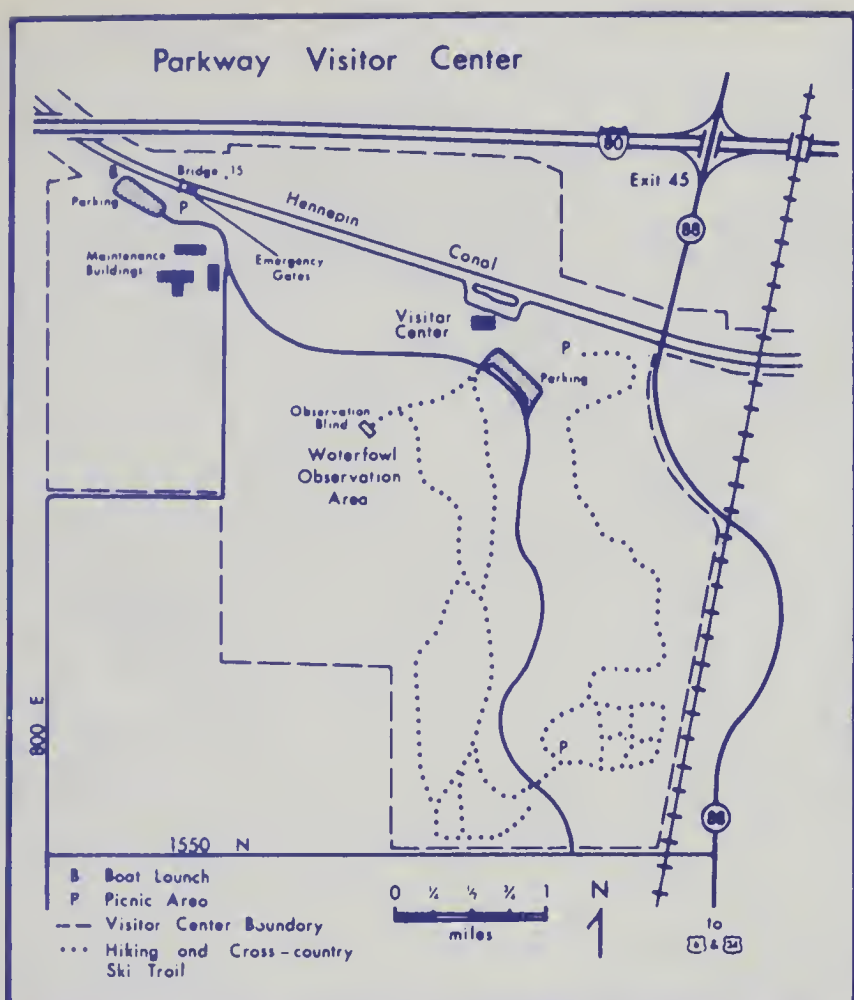
The Hennepin Canal Parkway is a unique, ninety-six mile, 4,300-acre waterway corridor in north-western Illinois. Formerly known as the Illinois-Mississippi Canal, but more commonly called the Hennepin Canal, the main line of the waterway extended from the great bend of the Illinois River to the Mississippi River west of Milan. A feeder from the Rock River at Rock Falls supplied water to the main line.



Land acquisition and construction of the canal by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began in 1890 and was completed in 1907. The canal served as a commercial waterway from 1907 to July of 1951, when it was closed to navigation. During the next two decades, the corps performed standby maintenance while negotiations were taking place for transfer of the waterway to the state. In 1970, the transfer was completed and the canal was placed under the supervision of the Illinois Department of Conservation.

The parkway is a popular recreational area for sport fishing, pleasure boating, picnicking, primitive camping, horseback riding, snowmobiling, backpacking, and hiking. In 1976, the Hennepin Canal Visitor Center was opened at a 400-acre recreational site northeast of Sheffield. The site includes an information center with displays and restroom facilities, a hiking and cross-country ski trail, a waterfowl observation area, a boat launch ramp, marina, picnic areas, playground equipment, one of the remaining canal truss bridges, and emergency gates that were used to stop the flow of water if a break occurred in one of the canal banks.

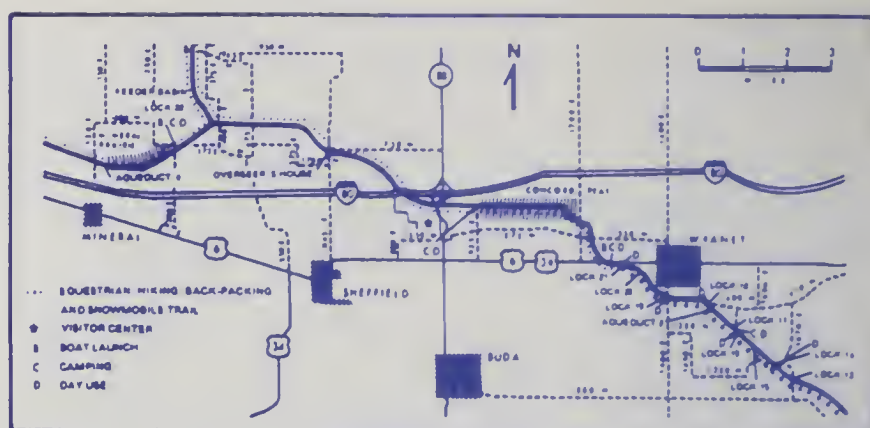
Construction of the eastern main line began in 1894 and was essentially completed in 1889, although not without problems. Because much of the



Hennepin Canal Visitor Center

route from the Illinois River paralleled or crossed Bureau Creek and its tributaries, high embankments and three aqueducts had to be built. Twenty-one locks were needed for the 196-foot ascent from the river to west of Wyanet. A final problem encountered during construction was a three-mile section of peat bog northwest of Wyanet that had to be excavated by machine and the canal prism lined with clay.

The area near the visitor center has several noteworthy sites. North of Sheffield on County Road 645E is one of three remaining overseer's houses. The two-story frame structure has been occupied continuously since it was built near the turn of the century.



Western Section

The canal feeder joins the main line between Sheffield and Mineral. The feeder basin, also referred to as the summit pool, may be reached by a number of county roads. Lock 22, which has been restored to its original condition, is one mile west of the basin at County roads 1750N and 300E and has a girder lift bridge on the downstream end, a day use area, a primitive camping site, and a boat launch ramp.

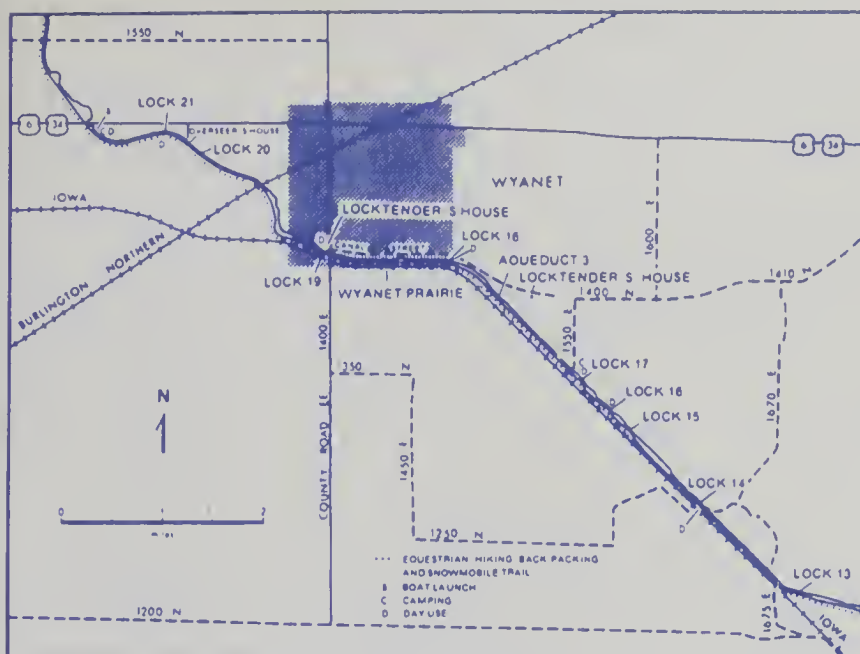
Mineral Prairie is a 9.5-acre remnant of bluejoint grass along the north bank of the canal between Lock 22 and Aqueduct 4. The aqueduct is less than one-half mile east of County Road 120E north of Mineral.

An equestrian, hiking, backpacking, and snowmobile trail extends north on the feeder and to the west and east on the main line. The combined trail ends near Lock 6 on the eastern main line of the canal. A boat launch ramp is north of the feeder basin.

Directly east of the visitor center between County roads 975E and 1200E is the peat bog that had to be excavated during canal construction. Identified as Concord Peat, the 35.3-acre area on both sides of the canal was originally a fen community, but is now dominated by ragweed. A day use area and primitive camping site are immediately north of the canal on County Road 975E.

Farther east, the canal has an extensive variety of physical, cultural, and historic features. Nowhere are these features more concentrated than in the vicinity of Wyand.

The Lock 21 day use area is immediately east of the U.S. Route 6 and 34 bridge over the canal and has several primitive camping sites and a boat launch ramp. Also present are concrete skid foundations that were originally part of a boat repair facility.



Wyanet Area

The actual Lock 21 site marks the beginning of the canal's 196-foot descent to the Illinois River. As with most other locks on the canal, Lock 21 has been modified by removing the original gates and



Girder lift bridge at Lock 21

constructing a concrete headwall at the upstream end. The lock has a girder lift bridge on its downstream end and is a day use area.

A partially renovated overseer's house is midway between Lock 21 and Lock 20. Both the house and Lock 20 can be reached from U.S. Route 6 and 34.

The Lock 19 site on the southwest edge of Wyanet has a partially renovated locktender's house, a con-



Locktender's house at Lock 19

crete ice house, and a day use area. Lock 18, less than one mile downstream, is accessible from Canal Street.

Wyagnet Prairie, a 13-acre remnant dominated by little bluestem, is on the north side of the canal between locks 19 and 18. The area is adjacent to Canal Street just east of County Road EE (1400E), and has a 1.5-mile self-guiding loop interpretive trail.

Aqueduct 3 is less than one-quarter mile downstream from Lock 18. The aqueduct crosses West Bureau Creek and is being restored to its original condition. Northeast of Aqueduct 3 on the south side of County Road 1400N is a locktender's house that was originally at Lock 17.



Aqueduct 3

Locks 17 and 16 can be reached from County Road 1550E. The Lock 17 site has day use and primitive camping areas, and one of the remaining canal truss bridges. North of the bridge on the south bank is the foundation of the Post House where concrete fence posts and telephone poles that still line parts of the canal were manufactured.

An access road on the north bank leads from Lock 17 to Lock 16. Lock 16, also a day use area, has been restored to its original condition with miter



Restored Marshall gate at Lock 16

gates on the downstream end and a Marshall gate on the upstream end. The Marshall gate, named after Major W. L. Marshall who was in charge of canal construction until 1899, is unique to the waterway and operated on a horizontal axis using principles of buoyancy and pressure.

Lock 15 is two-tenths of a mile farther downstream from Lock 16 and is accessible by the canal tow-path. The nearly four-mile section of the canal from the upstream end of Lock 15 to just below the U.S. Route 6 and 34 bridge has been designated an historic zone by the Illinois Department of Conservation because of its unusual concentration of canal structures.

Lock 14 is reached from County roads 1670E and 1250N. The site is a day use area and has an original canal truss bridge immediately downstream from the lock. Lock 13 is two-tenths of a mile below the County Road 1675E canal crossing. An original canal truss bridge is adjacent to the road.



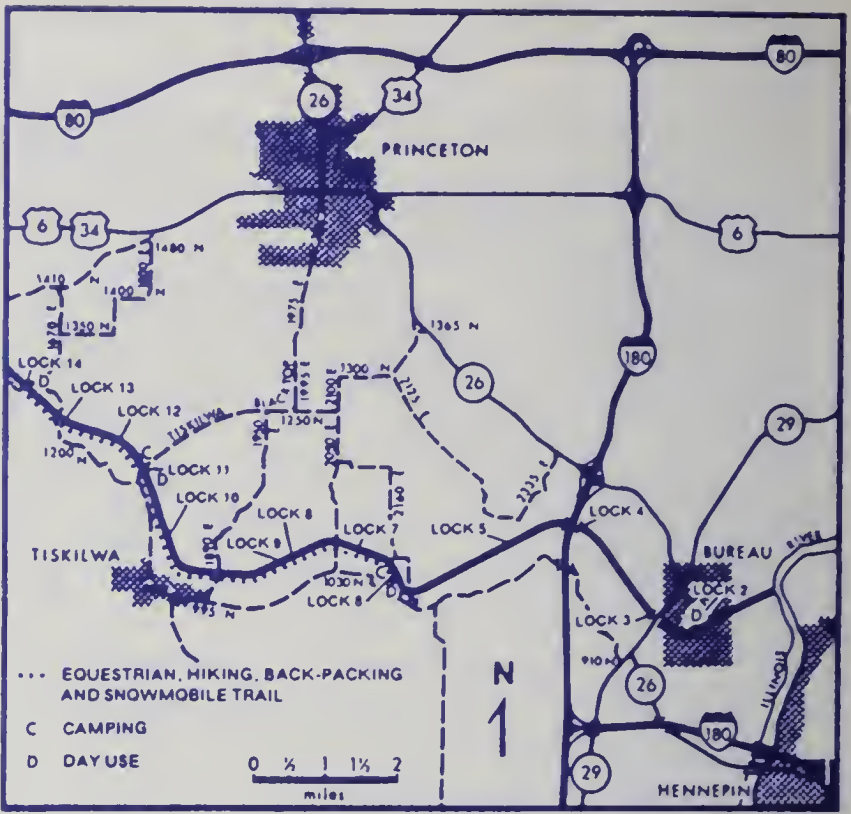
Canal truss bridge at Lock 14

The canal parallels Bureau Creek from Lock 13 to Lock 3. All of the locks have been modified, and many can be reached only on foot from the road crossings over the canal.

Lock 12 is midway between locks 13 and 11. Aqueduct 2 at Lock 12 has been replaced by an inverted syphon that carries the canal water beneath Bureau Creek.

Lock 11 north of Tiskilwa has a day use area, a primitive camping site, and a concrete garage. Locks 10 and 9 can be reached from either County Road 1950E or 1890E. Locks 8 and 7 also have two access points, County roads 1890E and 2050E.

Lock 7 is accessible from County Road 2050E, while Lock 6, which has day use and primitive camping areas, can be reached from County Road 2160E. The equestrian, hiking, backpacking, and



Eastern Section

snowmobile trail that extends east from the feeder basin ends at this county road.

Locks 5 and 4 are extremely difficult to reach. Aqueduct 1 at Lock 4 has been replaced by an inverted syphon. Access to Lock 3 is at the southern approach of the Illinois Route 26 and 29 bridge over the canal.

Lock 2 is the eastern end of the canal main line as Lock 1, inland from the Illinois River, has been covered by water for over fifty years. Lock 2, adjacent to Peoria Street in Bureau, is a day use area. The site also has a through girder retractable bridge that is limited to foot traffic.

Johnson Sauk Trail State Park, near the feeder basin, offers additional recreational opportunities. Other recreational areas within a reasonable distance from the eastern main line are Prophetstown State Park, Lee County Conservation Area, and Matthiessen, Starved Rock, and Buffalo Rock state parks.

This travel guide was prepared by Donald W. Griffin, Professor of Geography and Director, Institute for Regional, Rural, and Community Studies, Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois. Research and cartographic assistance were provided by John A. McFarland, Eric Shields, and Paul Adams, Department of Geography, Western Illinois University. Thanks are due to Steve Moser, Site Superintendent of the Hennepin Canal Parkway, for his comments, suggestions, and, above all, support for the travel guide series.